

Billy Hargrove Sucks by flippyspoon

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Summary:

Hopper puts Steve in charge of sobering up a wasted Billy Hargrove one afternoon and suddenly things start to make sense. Until they really don't.

Billy Hargrove Sucks

Author's Note:

- Translation into Русский available: [Billy Hargrove Sucks](#) by [MandoDiao](#)
- Translation into Español available: [Billy Hargrove Sucks \[Traducción\]](#) by [Dear_Rosie](#)

I ignored all my responsibilities after finishing s2 yesterday, as I am trash. There's some comics talk in this and yes, I know that I blatantly messed with the timeline of Batman comics and that A Death in the Family didn't happen until 1988 and it's bothering me too but I really wanted to write this conversation so let us pretend that Hawkins, Indiana exists in a universe with an Upside Down and also a Batman timeline where Jason Todd was murdered in 1984.

Find me on tumblr where I am also Flippyspoon.

Steve was bored and what was worse: it was Friday. There had been a time in his high school life (before Nancy) when Friday meant, at worst, hanging out with Tommy and Carol and some girl he didn't hate, everyone looking up to him, telling him how great he was. He'd always had something resembling a good time, at least before Tommy and Carol had collectively become too obnoxious to stomach. Then there had been Nancy and that had been a golden age. For a brief period, when he was with Nancy, sometimes (just sometimes) he had actually felt like he was the guy people saw when they looked at him. Then it had all gone to shit, and really he should have known better. He should have known it was always going to be a guy like Jonathan; Mr. Mysterious with the artistic sensibility and the soulful eyes or whatever it was Nancy saw when she looked at Jonathan. Finding out she'd never loved him, it wasn't just love being taken away, it was something else too. Nancy had made him feel like he was The Guy, the King Steve. Even if he didn't have her brains, he'd thought he might be the same person people thought he was if she loved him.

And more than that, a good person too. Which he had never much cared about before. Now...not so much.

Steve kicked a pebble down the sidewalk and sighed. He was going to Nancy's house later...to hang out with her brother and his friends. The pathetic part was, he was kinda looking forward to it. Nancy and Jonathan were likely on a date somewhere extolling the virtues of David Bowie or something. So Steve was left to himself with nothing to do in downtown Hawkins. He'd considering seeing *The Breakfast Club* again. He had already seen it three times. Initially it hadn't seemed like his kinda movie (Tom Cruise wasn't even in it) but something about it had tugged at him. The movie had come up in conversation with Nancy and Jonathan and Steve wouldn't even cop to seeing it. It felt too personal somehow.

He was loitering in front of Bradley's Big Buy when he heard the voice behind him and he grimaced, bracing for a fight.

"Haaaarrington!" Billy Hargrove appeared and Steve spun around just in time to see Billy stumble for a minute before leaning on the store's front window. His beloved mullet was looking a little bedraggled but his black shirt was, as per usual, open to mid-chest. He was holding a brown bag clearly disguising a bottle of booze in one fingerless-gloved hand and he grinned up at Steve before taking a swig. Openly drinking underage in broad daylight downtown? There was being a bad and then there was being stupid. "How's it hangin', pretty boy?" His breath puffed out, smelling of booze and cigarettes and Steve took a step back, even as he wished for a cigarette himself.

"Get lost, Hargrove," Steve muttered, and shoved his hands in his pockets turning to leave.

Billy walked backwards in front of Steve down the sidewalk so that Steve was forced to look at him. He spread his arms wide, stumbling again. He was clearly wasted.

"You look bored as hell! And *I'm* bored as hell. Let's do somethin'!" He spun around screamed, "NOT THAT THERE'S ANYTHING TO DO IN THIS SHIT TOWN!"

"Jesus!" Steve grabbed Billy by his collar and yanked him back.

"You're wasted, idiot. Why don't you go home and sleep it off?"

"Go home," Billy said flatly and fixed him with a humorless expression. "Right." He stood there silently for a beat, standing in the light, and Steve noticed for the first time the purpling around his eye.

"What happened to your eye?" Steve said, smiling a little. "Max finally kick your ass?"

"Fuck you, Harrington," Billy said, and scowled.

"Whatever." Steve rolled his eyes and stepped around him to stride purposefully onward. "Get out of my face."

"Yeah alright." Billy said, and if Steve hadn't glanced back to see the drunk about to walk right in front of an oncoming bus, Billy Hargrove might have been stuck in the ground next to Barb and Bob the Brain. Steve moved fast, just in time to yet again grab Billy by his collar, yanking him around and shoving him against a parked truck.

"What the hell is wrong with you!"

"Harrington!" Billy said, grinning up at him. "So nice to know you care."

"Jesus Christ."

"C'mon," Billy said, throwing him a wink. "Kill this bottle with me. I got nothing better to do. My Camaro's right over there..." He lazily motioned across the street and Steve felt a little sick.

"You're not driving anywhere, dumbass," Steve said.

"I'm *fine* ," Billy said, pushing him back. "Don't you worry 'bout *me* , pretty boy-"

"Not worried about you, I'm worried you'll kill somebody."

"Shit, kid," Hopper said, appearing from around the truck. "This again?"

Steve reflexively stood up a little straighter and he put his hands up

in defense. "I didn't do anything."

"I know that," Hopper said, looking at him like he was stupid. "This one on the other hand..."

"Chief," Billy said grimly, eyes fixed on the ground. He half-heartedly try to hide his brown bag behind him. This was not how Steve would have thought Billy would act toward a cop.

"How 'bout you hand over that bottle?" Chief said softly. He glanced up at Steve and said, "Give us a minute will ya? But don't take off just yet."

Steve smiled tightly and stepped away, edging a little closer when Hopper's back was turned, curious about the conversation.

"What happened to your eye, kid?" Hopper said. Steve strained to hear Billy but he couldn't make it out. "Doesn't look like nothin'. Can't help you if you don't let me... Okay well... Can we cut a deal then? I know you want to blow off steam but how about you do that out of sight. That's one. And two, don't hurt anybody else. You put your hands on Steve Harrington again and-"

"I wasn't *going* to," Billy said, indignant.

"Or *any* of his little friends..."

Steve felt simultaneously touched that the Chief cared about him on any level and irritated that he was known to be good friends with the nerd squad. Even if he had a good chunk of affection for the nerd squad at this point.

"Just don't give me any reason to take you in, got it?"

"Sounds just *radical* , sir."

"C'mon, cut the shit."

"Fine. Can I go now?"

"Not just yet. Hey, Harrington." He motioned Steve over. "Sober him up, will ya?"

“Huh?”

Hopper took a few crumpled dollars out of his pocket and handed them to Steve. “Take him to the diner, fill em’ up with coffee. Do me a favor. I’ll drive his car home-”

“No!” Billy said, attitude vanishing. “No no, look... “ He handed the keys to his Camaro over to Steve. “There. See? Not driving.”

Hopper gave Billy a long look. “I get it. Yeah okay.” He sighed and tossed Steve a nod. “Thanks, Steve.”

Steve, who had not actually agreed to anything, just shrugged. “I guess.”

It was Dustin and the bat all over again.

Hopper left and Billy crossed his arms, and stepped up to Steve, grinning again. “Looks like we got a date after all, Harrington.”

“Ah... Right....” Steve shook his head. Billy was *always* pulling that shit. Seemingly every time he spoke to Steve he’d fuck with him like that as if he were flirting and if Steve didn’t know better he’d think it was for real. But that was insane. As insane as demodogs... “C’mon, Hargrove. Let’s sober you up then. I got shit to do.”

Billy laughed and said, “No, you don’t.”

At the diner, Billy sat across from Steve in a booth, spreading his arms out behind him on the back of his seat, smiling lazily. Steve was uptight. This was fucking *weird*. He ordered Billy a coffee and a Coke for himself, feeling scrutinized the entire time by those piercing blue eyes.

When the waitress walked away, Billy sneered at her back. “There are seriously no hot chicks in this town. Guess the hot ones all get called home to Cali when they grow tits.”

“Nice.”

“Oh sorry, man. Didn’t mean to offend your delicate sensibilities.”

“Can you just...not be a tool for five seconds?” Steve said. “Just try it. See how it feels.”

“What should I be like then?” Billy said, sitting forward and resting his arms on the table. “A white knight like you?”

Their drinks came and Steve raised an eyebrow as Billy took a swallow of hot black coffee and licked his bottom lip.

“White knight?”

“Protecting the children, being a hero, all that.” Billy chuckled. “I heard Max say some *crazy* shit into the walkie-talkie when she thought I wasn’t listening. I asked her about it, she said you fought a bear or some shit. After she *stole* my car.”

“I didn’t fight a bear,” Steve muttered.

“I hope not. Might have fucked your pretty boy face all up worse than I did.”

Steve’s mouth twitched and he felt...flustered. Seriously, what the hell?

“What you should do is apologize to Lucas Sinclair,” Steve said, firmly changing the subject. “For being a racist piece of shit.”

“I’m not *racist* .” Billy said.

“Oh really?” Steve said with a snort. “You went after that kid specifically. Why?”

“Max liked him best,” Billy said, as if it should be obvious. “I could tell.”

“So what? Why shouldn’t Max like somebody? What do you care?”

“Why should she get to, when I can’t?”

“Huh?” Steve gaped at him, baffled. “What’re you talking about?”

“Nothing. Forget it. I’m drunk.”

“Clearly.”

They were quiet then. Steve hoping this sobering up wouldn't take too long. Billy made him feel off his game, to say the least, like there was something Billy knew that Steve didn't and he was being asked to figure it all out. Billy brooded, his eyes fixed on the floor. He breathed too deliberately, the way drunk people do.

“So how's the love life?” Billy finally said, smirking. “Has the Beamer been a'rockin? Please tell me you're over that chick already.”

Steve had an urge to tell Billy it was none of his goddamn business what kind of action he was most certainly not getting but it wasn't a terribly objectionable question so instead he shrugged. “It's a small town. Not much to choose from.”

“You're tellin' me.” Billy finished his coffee and motioned for a fresh pour as the waitress walked by.

“I don't get it,” Steve said. He nodded at Billy. “You're new, you got the whole...bad boy vibe going. I've seen the way girls look at you at school. Even if no one's your first choice, I'd think you'd be tearin' it up and you're not. There'd be talk. I mean you're an asshole but for some reason that doesn't bother a lot of high school girls.”

Billy stuck his tongue between his teeth and squinted at Steve. “I only go after who I *really* want.”

“And that is...?”

“Um...” Billy chewed on his lip. Steve found it weirdly distracting. “Nancy's mom.”

Steve spat Coke and Billy burst out laughing.

“ *What ?* ”

“I'm *joking* ! Jesus!” Billy was cackling and Steve laughed despite himself. “God, your face though...”

“Well, she is pretty hot,” Steve said, allowing himself a smirk. “And Nancy's dad is no prize, that's for sure.”

“Oh, you think I have an in then?”

“No! Oh Jesus...”

“Joking!”

They were both laughing. For a minute, Steve forgot who he was talking to. They were just two dumb idiots fucking around. Billy sat back, his nose scrunched up, breathless with laughter. “No no, but seriously, man, I went over to the Wheelers to look for Max once and fuckin’ Mrs. Wheeler was about to climb me, I swear to God.”

Steve about snorted Coke out of his nose thinking about it and he shook his head. “Oh my God...”

“I’m not kidding, man. I could be Nancy’s *dad* right now.”

That brought another fresh peal of laughter and Steve sat back, a little pained from it, holding his stomach. “That’s...that’s insane!”

“I know!”

Their laughter died down and Billy sat forward again, chewing on his lips, clearly working up to something. “Hey, I heard about some supposedly good spot down by the quarry? You wanna...hang out there sometime? You can bring fuckin’ Sam and Diane if you want to. Just have some beers and weed. Listen to some shit. I have a good radio.”

Steve stared at him. “Are you...trying to be...friends...with me?”

Billy’s face fell and he stood up. “You know what, fuck it. Forget it. Toldja I was drunk, must be nuts-”

“Hey!” Steve grabbed his hand and Billy looked down at him. It had been so obvious the whole time but only then did the outpouring of vulnerability coming from Billy occur to Steve, though he didn’t know what to call it. “You did beat the shit out of me? So...you can see why this is, ya know, *weird* ?”

Billy’s fingers twitched between his and Steve let go with a jerk.

“I’m...sorry. Alright?” Billy’s mouth was tight and he suddenly looked

much younger. Steve wondered again what had happened to his eye. He was definitely still getting into dumb fights with *somebody* . “I really just wanted to beat the shit out of somebody okay? You were there.”

“But why?”

“Harrington, there isn’t enough bourbon in the world,” Billy said dryly.

Steve weighed his options. From the way things were going, there was the slight chance that when he was deciding not to be an asshole, Billy wasn’t terrible to be around. And it would be nice to hang out with somebody who wasn’t thirteen. Still though, Billy was hardly trustworthy...

“If you apologize to Lucas Sinclair,” Steve said, “I might consider it. Going down to the quarry, I mean. Or hanging out. Whatever. Maybe. Possibly.”

Billy sat back down just as the waitress returned to pour his coffee and he smiled up at her, somewhere between charming and sleazy. When she was gone Billy looked at Steve and said, “Okay.”

“Okay?” Steve was taken aback. “Really. You will? On Monday. I’m going to check up on it so you better not lie.”

“Man, you really have a hard-on for those nerdy little half-pints, don’t you?”

“Don’t be gross,” Steve said. “But seriously...why me?”

Billy stroked his chin and said, “I think it’s the hair, man. Those luscious locks, they just call to me.”

“You’re such a tool,” Steve said, but this time he was laughing as he shook his head.

Steve stayed with Billy for another two cups of coffee until it was

obvious he had sobered up. Only then did he give the keys back. Steve could tell because that air of desperation had faded a little and Billy, while not in asshole mode, was a little stiffer, a little more guarded. Too bad, Steve thought. That nakedly desperate Billy Hargrove was sort of fascinating in a strange way. Finally Billy took his leave and Steve watched him walk. He wasn't stumbling or swaying at all. He was also wearing about the tightest jeans Steve had ever seen on a guy and Steve briefly thought of Billy's fingers twitching under his.

When he was gone, Steve found himself still with another couple of hours before it would be not too early to go to the Wheelers and, inevitably, he ended up in front of The Hawk. With a sigh of resignation, Steve paid up and went in to watch *The Breakfast Club* yet again.

It was in the middle of Judd Nelson's tragic reenactment of his family life, that everything clicked for Steve: Billy's black eye, the way Hopper had seemed more concerned than annoyed like he usually would be, the way Billy had seemed genuinely afraid to let Hopper drive the car home because if his parents were home and saw a cop driving their son's car there'd be hell to pay, maybe beyond the appropriate amount of hell. Billy's rage. Billy's desire to beat somebody anybody up...

In the theater Steve, startled, said aloud, "Oh shit." The lady behind him poked his shoulder and told him to shush.

After the movie, Steve drove to the Wheelers, deep in thought. This was tricky. He also didn't have confirmation. Was he just making up some justification for Billy Hargrove because he wanted to like Billy Hargrove? But why the hell would he want to like Billy Hargrove?

"Yo, Steve!" Dustin grinned up at him and it had become impossible not to smile when Dustin was grinning.

Steve slapped him a high five. "Alright, nerds, what've ya got for

me?” Steve was carrying a paper bag full of comics. A bag he was *returning* , as he had now read them all. He handed the bag over to Dustin and plopped down on the basement sofa. He was apparently hanging out with Dustin and Will tonight, for the most part. Lucas and Max were hanging out at Lucas’s house and Mike was home but holed up in the blanket fort talking to El on the walkie. Though El was still in quasi-hiding, Mike was allowed to visit *her* and when he wasn’t at Hop’s cabin, it hushed whispers over the radio, fidgeting with his shoe laces as he sat cross-legged atop the blankets. Sometimes there were morse code messages. The other boys seemed confused at the need for morse code but Steve assumed they were especially soppy love notes.

And Steve was reading comic books.

It was because Steve had this big aquarium. It was his parent’s aquarium, following their catastrophic tropical fish phase and had been left abandoned in the garage, just waiting for its chance to shine again. Which turned out to be after the destruction of Dustin’s turtle tank by Dart the Interdimensional Demodog.

Shit does happen after all.

Steve had brought the aquarium over and just kind of ended up hanging out in Dustin’s room, watching him lovingly set up rocks and water and a lamp for his pet turtle. It was kind of cute. And boring as hell.

“Man, you gotta lotta comics,” Steve had muttered. “How do you even follow all that stuff? I had a buddy who was into comics. It looked so complicated.”

“You just...” Dustin shrugged at him. “Start reading? You just kinda pick things up as you go.”

“Hmm. Well. Got anything for me to read?” He watched the back of Dustin as he carefully laid out a few multicolored pebbles. Wordlessly, he grabbed a comic from the pile next to the aquarium and handed it to Steve.

“ *Batman* ,” Steve said, examining the cover. “Heard of him. Is it like

that old show? ‘Cause that was pretty corny. It was funny though.”

“It’s *not* like the show,” Dustin said with authority.

A few issues in and Steve was hooked. Though so far he had no interest in reading anything but *Batman* ...and *Detective Comics* . Which was also *Batman* ? He found that totally confusing.

“Jesus,” Dustin said, unpacking the bag. “You read all these already?”

Steve cleared his throat. “Oh, ya know. Senior year’s pretty light on the homework so...”

“Where’d you leave off?” Will asked him.

Steve threw up his hands. “Fuckin’ Jason Todd just *died* ? What the hell!”

“Were you sad?” Will said.

“Did you like Jason Todd?” Dustin said, looking genuinely confused.

“Well...yeah.”

Dustin was laughing. “Nobody likes Jason Todd!”

“I did. I thought he was interesting. A Robin who was a street kid and kinda fucked up? And then he gets beaten to death with a crowbar by the Joker? Bullshit. Could he come back to life or something?”

Will snorted a laugh. “Not Jason Todd. He’s gone for good.”

“Yeah,” Dustin agreed. “That guy is dead as a doornail. Besides, Joker killing Jason really messed up Bruce, right? So that’s made the stories pretty cool.”

“I guess.”

Dustin exchanged a look with Will and put a little thirteen-year-old arm around Steve. “Are you really sad about Jason, Steve? Do you need a hug?”

“Shut your mouth, Henderson,” Steve said.

"There are a lot of tears in comics. But you have to learn to move on."

"Dark Phoenix Saga," Will said knowingly.

"Ah!" Dustin clutched his heart and fell back onto the sofa. "Steve's not ready for that! His heart is too pure!"

"I hate both of you," Steve declared. The boys laughed and Steve, attempting to be casual, strummed through the fresh comic he'd been handed and said, "Lemme ask you guys a weird question."

"We love weird questions," Dustin assured him.

"Okay, but it's serious," Steve said, putting on his Adult Face.

"Okay okay," Dustin said. "Shoot."

He glanced at Mike, still cuddled up in his tent with the walkie-talkie. "Are Max's parents like...assholes? Or anything? You guys heard anything like that from Max or Lucas?"

"What exactly do you mean by asshole?" Dustin said.

"Like do they hit Max and her step-brother or anything is what I'm asking. That kinda shit."

"*Oh*."

"Not Max, I don't think," Will said. "But..." Will made a face.

"What?" Steve said, giving him a nudge.

"Well... Lucas said that Max said she's heard her step-dad screaming at her brother a lot. A lot a lot. And then sometimes there are loud noises like... thumps. So maybe."

"Maybe that was him though," Dustin said. "I mean Billy Hargrove sucks. He was practically gonna kill Lucas."

"Yeah," Steve said with a sigh. "I think this is *why* Billy Hargrove sucks."

"And he pounded you into the floor," Dustin said.

"Yes, I know-"

"I mean you were *demolished* . We didn't even have enough Snoopy Band-Aids to contain all the blood-"

"Okay, Dustin!"

"I'm just saying."

On Monday, right after Econ., none other than Lucas Sinclair cornered Steve at his locker.

"Hey, Harrington."

Steve spun around and it took him a second to think to look down at the kid, who gazed up at him with dazed expression.

"Man," Lucas said. "The weirdest thing just happened. And I'm supposed to tell you about it."

"Okay."

"Billy Hargrove...apologized to me?" Lucas was completely baffled.

Steve bit back a smile and crossed his arms. "Yeah?"

"Yeah, he said he was sorry for being an asshole to me and that I'm supposed to tell you he said that. And I'm supposed to tell you that he really meant it."

"Okay." Steve nodded. "Good."

"Excuse me, what the hell was that about?"

"I dunno," Steve said. "Maybe he's turning over a new leaf."

"Yeah right," Lucas said, rolling his eyes. "Billy Hargrove sucks."

"Is he still messing with Max?"

“Nah, no way. Ever since Max went after his balls with the bat, he’s been cool with her.” He shook his head, and Steve could almost see the hearts in his eyes. “She’s so awesome.”

“Yeah, Max seems pretty cool. Anyway, thanks. Message received.”

“You guys are both weird,” Lucas informed him, before spinning around and trotting away.

Steve chuckled to himself, oddly pleased. He hoped Billy really had meant it. But there was something about the way he wanted to make sure Steve knew he’d kept his end of the deal that was sort of flattering.

“What the hell is wrong with me?” Steve said to himself and spun on his heel to get over to Trig.

After Trig, there was lunch, and Steve hadn’t even made it to his locker before he was cornered again.

“Harrington.” Billy sidled up next to him, carrying a single spiral notebook. “Sinclair talk to you?”

“Yep,” Steve said simply, and glanced over at Billy who clutched his notebook to his chest, drumming his fingers, and leaning against the lockers with a kind of affect. Playing it cool. Or trying to.

“So...” Billy’s eyebrows knitted together and he leaned in, conspiratorially. “Am I absolved, your majesty?”

“Absolved,” Steve drawled the word and smirked over at him. “Check out Hargrove with the three dollar words.”

Billy wore a lopsided smile and glanced away, sheepish.

Shit, Steve thought. *Do I make him nervous?*

“C’mon man,” Billy said. “I gotta show you something. Under the bleachers.”

“Under the bleachers?”

Steve’s first thought was that Billy wanted to smoke weed, which Steve was potentially up for. People also fooled around under the bleachers... He flushed at the thought, shoving his Trig. book into his locker, wondering if Billy could tell. He shut his locker with a bang and eyed Billy, wary.

This is probably some weird hormonal thing , Steve thought. Dustin could probably explain it in his scientist language. Hormones making you think crazy shit that you weren’t actually interested in all.

He’d considered this theory before in regard to other similar thoughts.

“C’mon, man.” Billy tugged on his sleeve and Steve found himself following him, watching that mischievous smirk, those deceptively sparkly blue eyes.

When Billy revealed the joint, Steve expelled a sigh of relief. He was psyched too. He hadn’t smoked weed since he’d been with Nancy. He’d gone a bit overboard perhaps with the idea of being Mr. Perfect with her, having put her on such a pedestal. When he looked back on it now, he felt like he saw her more clearly than when they’d been together. She would probably not have balked at smoking a joint or two. Besides, it wasn’t as if Jonathan goddamn Byers wouldn’t be smoking weed now and then.

They sat facing each other, straddling a thick metal bar. Steve watched the striped shadows cross Billy’s face, a line of light painting his eyes. Billy’s lips puckered slightly around the tip of the joint and his cheeks puffed in and out quick, quick and Steve saw the line of his jaw tighten as he held the smoke and handed the joint over, their fingers brushing.

The twitch of his fingers under Steve’s .

Steve inhaled and held the smoke, his gaze locked with Billy’s. He heard Billy tapping his fingers against the thick hollow bar.

Then you just wait until you feel it , he’d told Dustin.

It's going to storm soon , Steve thought. They both exhaled and Steve held the metal bar between his hands to steady himself, feeling light and dizzy and good.

"Good shit," Steve muttered.

"Yeah."

"So-"

"Have you ever gotten a blowjob while drivin', Harrington?" Billy was looking at him so calmly. He was close, too close maybe.

"What? No."

"It's awesome," Billy said, speaking softly. "Back in Cali, I had this chick going down on me while I was speedin' down the coast. Gotta be *kinda* careful," he said, laughing softly. "It was like four in the morning so there was nobody out. Just...the engine thundering under you, right? And these hot fuckin' lips wrapped around my dick?"

Steve held on tight to the bar and just a little, without quite realizing he was doing it, he bore down and his breath caught at the feeling. Billy's eyes were searching his as he spoke so quietly that Steve had to lean in a little bit to hear him.

"This chick's tongue around my dick, man... So good... and he's just goin' at it..."

He .

Abruptly, Steve's heart started pounding so hard in his chest that it hurt and he thought Billy must be hearing it. Billy hadn't seemed to notice his slip as he took another toke. Or he didn't care. Or it was deliberate...

"You should try it sometime," Billy said. "Change your life."

Steve wasn't always quick to grasp a concept that wasn't laid right out in front of him. He had his moments, sure. And maybe it didn't help that his new closest friends were all much younger yet much smarter and it was sometimes painfully obvious.

But he knew now, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that Billy Hargrove wanted to suck his dick.

“Maybe.” Steve didn’t so much say it as mouth the words, his eyes fixed on Billy’s fingers tapping rapidly on the pole. The pendant of the long necklace Billy wore dangled between them. His stupid shirt unbuttoned right down to there. Steve’s brain was humming. A wild image flitted through his head of grabbing that necklace to tug Billy forward and kiss him.

Fuck .

He took another toké.

“You wanna go to the movies on Friday?” Billy said.

“Sure,” Steve said, with a jerky attempt at a casual shrug.

“Kay.”

Steve spent the rest of the week plagued with the question of whether or not he had agreed to go on a date with Billy Hargrove. The only thought that filled him with more anxiety than that question was whether or not he wanted it to be a date. It didn’t help that Billy was all over him all week. It most certainly didn’t help that he couldn’t help but shiver when Billy whispered something lewd in his ear in the middle of Econ., leaning over in his seat behind Steve, his long hair brushing Steve’s neck. Showering at gym was the worst. Steve had become used to it, no big deal, but now everything felt so charged and when his eyes would lock with Billy, both of them naked and wet, Billy would throw him a wink and Steve had to turn away for fear of getting hard.

People were noticing too. So far nobody had caught onto the subtext, but it was hard to miss that Steve goddamn Harrington had started hanging out with that asshole, Chesty McMetalhead from California, especially when Steve rolled the Beamer in at 8am and found himself grinning at the sight of Billy leaning against his Camaro, a cigarette

hanging out of his mouth, ready to meet him.

“What is going on with you and Billy Hargrove?”

Steve shut his locker and looked down at Nancy who fixed him with a disapproving pinched mouth.

“What do you mean?” Steve shrugged, attempting to play innocent.

“Steve,” Nancy said. “C’mon. Everybody’s talking about it. You guys are suddenly attached at the hip. Did I miss something? Didn’t he beat your face in not too long ago?”

Steve bristled at that and strode down the hall, throwing her an annoyed glance. “I can think of somebody else who beat my face in and you don’t seem to have a problem with him.”

“That was different and you know it.”

“Yeah, well my face felt the same way about it.”

“Steve. He’s a jerk.”

“He apologized to Lucas,” Steve said, not a little defensive.

She squinted at him. “Really?”

“Yeah. Just ask Lucas. Billy’s really not that bad once you get to know him.”

She just raised her eyebrows at him in response.

Steve stopped in the hall and glared at her. “Is there anything else or are you just going to stand there judging me?”

“I’m just trying to look out for you,” she said. “Really.”

Steve sighed. Of course she was. He rested his hands on her shoulders and smiled kindly. “Okay. I get it. But seriously. I’m fine. Actually, we were talking about hanging out the quarry soon. Maybe a bonfire? You can bring Byers. We’ll listen to some tunes.”

“Billy will play Metallica,” Nancy said, wrinkling her nose. “I hate

Metallica.”

“I kinda like em’.” Steve shrugged and punched her shoulder and turned to go to Trig.

On Friday Steve took forty-five minutes longer than usual to get the hair just right. He was comforted by the assurance that Billy was likely taking just as long or longer. He changed clothes three times and finally settled on a black t-shirt and his black Members Only jacket because it made him feel a little like Tom Cruise and all his other shirts, all the striped knit polos, seemed childish by comparison.

The Breakfast Club was still the only movie in town. Steve was surprised Billy had an interest in it. Steve had no intention of admitting that he had already seen it four times. He arrived ten minutes early and paced around in front of The Hawk, feeling ridiculous, nodding hello to people he knew walking by. He expect Billy to be late. He just seemed like the type that would be. But at exactly five o'clock the Camaro came roaring up and parked before emitting an unnecessary rumble. Billy got out and swaggered up to Steve, a bright purple shirt displaying all kinds of skin, the mullet fluffed up and ready to party.

He also looked like he was wearing eyeliner.

That's not sexy , Steve thought. *That's definitely not sexy. Fuck.*

“Really?” Frankie Colfax was a sophomore who worked the box office and when Steve came up to buy a ticket his eyes bugged out. “ *Again* ? I mean it's good but-”

“Shut up !” Steve growled, glancing back at Billy who was smoking, staring out at the street.

There were only two other people in the theater. Billy wanted to sit way in the back in the middle. Did it look weird that they were sitting right next to each other without a seat between them when the theater was almost empty? Steve wasn't sure. He didn't want to think about that. There was already enough to think about like Billy's

cologne swimming in his head and the way he sat all spread out and taking up space so that his leg was nestled right up against Steve's.

They watched the preview about the guy from *Family Ties* time traveling in a DeLorean and Billy leaned over and whispered in his ear, "DeLoreans are pieces of shit."

Steve chuckled and whispered back, "I think this movie is about his mom wanting to bone him."

Billy cackled. "Why does that guy's voice always crack?"

"Hasn't gotten through puberty yet I guess."

Steve enjoyed the movie for a fifth time, though he had to stop himself from mouthing along with some of the dialogue. He glanced over every time he saw Billy laugh at the funny parts. He looked so different when he was actually having a good time, more open and softer. He couldn't help but watch Billy's face when Judd Nelson went into his big speech and mimed getting punched out by his father. And sure enough, Billy got all tensed up, his hands gripping the armrests tightly, his eyes pleading.

Shit .

"You alright?" Steve whispered.

He expected Billy to get all guarded and defensive but instead he just shrugged slightly and whispered. "Yeah, yeah." Steve didn't quite believe him.

When Judd Nelson and Molly Ringwald kissed in the parking lot, he felt a hand on his knee.

His dick moved and he wanted, he wanted, his heart thudding...

"What're you doing?" Steve jerked away.

Molly Ringwald pressed her earring into John Bender's fingerless gloved hand and Billy and Steve faced each other, mouths inches apart.

“Just...just fuckin’ with you, Harrington,” Billy said, sounding breathless and panicked.

The light of the screen flickered over Billy’s face, his eyes glowing blue; pleading.

“Are you?” Steve whispered.

Simple Minds whined and Billy shot out of his seat and ran for the exit.

“Shit.”

He found Billy cowering in the alley, his hand shaking as he tried to light a cigarette. He stood up straight when he saw Steve, braced against a brick wall, chin upturned, looking ready to fight.

“Movie’s over,” Billy said through gritted teeth. “Wanted a smoke.”

“Okay,” Steve said with a snort. “Can I bum one?”

Steve grabbed Billy’s Zippo and lit his cigarette for him and Billy dug out another cig, his fingers fumbling.

“I was just messing with you,” Billy said weakly, looking like he was about to cry.

Steve lit his own cigarette and took a long drag and leaned against the wall next to Billy.

“No you weren’t,” Steve said. “But I... It’s... It’s okay that you weren’t.”

Billy gaped at him, lips parted, cigarette dangling.

“I freaked out,” Steve mumbled. “I’ve never...I’ve never...with...”

“I figured that,” Billy said quietly.

And suddenly it was out there. For real this time.

“But you have?” Steve said.

“Well, you know out in Cali we’re all queer,” Billy said.

“Fuck off,” Steve said, chuckling despite himself.

They smoked their cigarettes in silence and then Billy turned into Steve so they were facing each other, blowing smoke out the sides of their mouths. “You want my dick,” Billy said, eyes alight.

“Uh, you clearly want *my* dick,” Steve said, stubbing out his cigarette.

“Oh yeah, Harrington,” Billy said, stepping closer, dropping his cigarette. “Every. Goddamn. Inch of it.”

Steve whispered, “Shit.” And then Billy Hargrove was kissing him.

Billy was hard, hot difficult, overwhelming... His tongue probed Steve’s mouth, setting him back on his heels. He’d always been the aggressive one, kissing girls. It was a visceral shock to feel a larger harder body against his making its desire known. But Billy wasn’t being rough like Steve might’ve expected. He was slow; just deliberate, declarative. Steve found himself up against the wall, his fingers spreading across Billy’s chest. He scratched the slippery synthetic fabric of that open shirt and his thumbs felt hot skin, hard pecs... Billy bit his bottom lip and he grunted, forgetting himself, throwing his head back where it met unforgiving brick.

“Oh fuck,” Steve said.

Billy bit his earlobe and said, “I *knew* it, I knew you wanted me.”

“Hold on, hold on...” Steve pushed him gently away just to catch his breath. He glanced at over at the opening of the alley. It was dark but there were streetlights, people walking by. “I just...”

Billy glanced down at the swollen state of Steve’s crotch and poked his side. “I get it. C’mon. Let’s go somewhere.”

“Wait, wait, tell me something first,” Steve said. “For real.”

“Ugh!” Billy rolled his eyes and threw up his hands. “*What ?*”

“Does...does your dad beat you up?” Steve said.

Steve watched Billy's face fall slowly and then he shoved Steve against the wall. "Fuck! Fuck you, Harrington! Great. I got it alright? White knight Harrington wants to save the fuck up or something? That's what this is? Mr. Hero? *Fuck* you!"

It occurred to him this might not have been the perfect time to bring that up.

He started to go and Steve grabbed his arm. "Will you stop running off all the time? Shit. I'm sorry. Alright? I'm not trying to... I'm no hero, trust me. I just..."

Billy stopped and fixed him with that broken vulnerable look he couldn't seem to contain around Steve anymore.

"Yeah." Billy shrugged. "You want the real shit? He fuckin' hates me. He always has, then he caught me getting blown by a guy when I was fourteen. How do you think that went? And fuckin' Susan could give a shit. As long as *Max* is doing okay, everything's just peachy-"

"That's not her fault," Steve said.

"I know that!" He kicked a garbage can and breathed hard, running his hands through his hair. "*I know* okay."

Steve tugged him closer. "And your eye?"

"That was for the D in Trig. That's why I felt like getting wasted okay?"

Steve nodded. "I'm sorry. It sucks." He motioned between them. "But that's not *why* this is... It just kind of explains a lot." He smiled slightly. "You're like John Bender."

Billy rolled his eyes at that. "Who's that make you? Molly Ringwald?"

"Shut up," he said, cracking a smile. He was fidgeting with the sleeve of Billy's jacket, the leather worn and soft. "You wanna come hang out at my house? Nobody's home. Have some beers?" He imitated Billy's husky voice. "Listen to some tunes?"

Billy grinned wide. "You tryin' to get lucky, pretty boy?"

"I did *not* mean it like that."

"Yeah, ya did." He tugged on Steve's sleeve. "C'mon, amigo."

They had to drive their separate cars to Steve's house and it felt weird to be alone in his BMW with his thoughts, reality setting in.

He talked to himself as he drove.

"Fuck it. So what? So someday I'm gonna have a boring goddamn job and marry some girl and live in a cul-de-sac, right? Either that or the fuckin' gate opens again and kills us all." He laughed a little hysterically. "Right. World might end. Why not be crazy? Why not have Billy Hargrove suck my dick? Holy *shit* !"

Billy gave Steve all kinds of shit for living in such a nice house with such a nice pool, but he was happy to peel off his jacket and take off his boots and sit on the edge, dipping his feet. Steve brought out his boombox and a chilled six pack and sat down next to him, handing over a beer. He took off his own jacket and his shoes and socks and dropped his feet in the water, nudging Billy's toes with his. It was chilly out but he liked the way Billy eyes roved over him in his tight t-shirt and the water was warm. Van Halen was blaring.

"So why me?" Steve said. "Seriously. Other than the hair, of course. 'Cause be honest, man. You *like* me."

"I dunno," Billy said. "Seems like you have everything. And...you don't even know what to do with it."

Steve snorted at that. "That's why you *like* me?"

"Made me curious," he said with a shrug. "Also the first time I saw your package in the shower."

"Sssshut..."

Billy nudged him and then they were kissing again. Steve was getting heated and scooted back on the ground and let Billy press him down and climb on top of him and mouth at his neck. Steve was totally

unsure of himself. What were the expectations of guys? But Billy didn't seem to have any complaints. Steve's hands crept up under his shirt, kneading that hot skin and feeling the muscles of Billy's back flex. Billy sat up and took off his shirt and Steve took off his tee, writhing on the ground, banging his elbow, his dick hard in his pants. Then Billy's bare chest was pressed against his and he shivered at the sensation, the heat and hardness of it, Billy's silver chain a thin line of cold on his skin. Billy bit Steve's nipple and he gasped, arching his back.

"I wanna suck your dick," Billy whispered, looking up at him.

Steve nodded, his head bobbing around wildly. "Uh huh."

Then his fly was down and Billy was raking his teeth down the front of Steve's tented Calvins.

"Goddammit," Steve mumbled. "Holy shit."

Billy knew what the hell he was doing. He tortured Steve for a bit with teeth and tongue and when he finally pulled Steve's briefs down, his nails digging in a little, he took Steve's dick in his mouth. Steve forgot how to breathe and saw stars.

He did not last long.

When it was over, Steve lay back, mouth stuck open, blinking, and Billy lay next to him, leaning on his elbow. He gazed down at him, grinning, cocky. Steve had come on his *face* and Billy seemed to get a kick out of that, giggling and wiping it off with his shirt. Steve watched moonlight glint off Billy's dangling silver earring. He pulled his briefs up but kicked off his jeans and rolled Billy over onto his back, kissing his satisfied grin away.

"I wanna see what you look like," he said, just before shoving his hand down into Billy's pants. "When you come."

Billy gripped his shoulders and thrust into his hands. "Steve..."

Billy calling him by his first name sounded strange but also hot and Steve kissed him while he stroked his dick. Billy was trying to stay quiet but he pulled Steve close and let out a helpless yelp of a moan

when he came. Steve stared down at his cum-covered hand as if trying to make sense of it. But none of this made any sense. Why even try? He leaned over and got his hand wet in the pool and wiped it on his shirt. He reached over for Billy's beer, taking a swig as Billy caught his breath before sitting up to light a cigarette.

"Did you ever jerk it to guys before?" Billy said, taking a drag before trading the cigarette for the beer.

"Um..." Steve puffed and scratched his head. "Kinda. Maybe."

Billy laughed and slapped his shoulder. "Who?"

"Um...that guy from *Red Dawn* and... *The Outsiders* ? Did you see those?"

"Patrick Swayze," Billy nodded knowingly. "Yeah. He's hot."

"This is so weird," Steve said.

"What's weird?"

"Just...talking about hot guys with a guy?"

"Weirder than me blowing you?"

"Yeah. Definitely." Steve shrugged and Billy only laughed at him.

After they killed the cigarette, Steve yanked Billy's pants off and dragged him protesting into the pool, dunking him before he could get his bearings.

"Fucked up my hair, asshole," Billy said, splashing him.

Steve cocked his head. With his hair slicked back, Billy looked exponentially more beautiful.

"Tough break, pretty boy," Steve drawled and Billy shook his head and splashed him again and then it was bigger splashes and grab ass and then they were kissing in the corner of the pool in the eerie blue light, listening to Thompson Twins. Steve broke away and said, "Ya know... I mean if your dad's ever givin' you shit, you could come

over here.”

Billy looked at him askance. “I don’t think your parents would dig me very much.”

“Well, play nice and they won’t even notice you. Trust me on that one.”

“Maybe,” Billy said.

“So if you only like guys then why do you put it on so much for girls all the time? What is that?”

“I like the attention,” Billy said shrugging. “Feels good when Mrs. Wheeler or whoever totally wants to bone me. And ya know, it’s...cover.”

“Right. So are we...?”

“ *Boyfriends* ?”

“Don’t get so cocky, Hargrove. You started this.”

Billy nodded and abruptly took off his necklace and leaned in to clasp it around Steve’s neck. He wouldn’t make eye contact; treading water, waiting. Steve reached up and fingered the silver chain, eyes wide. “Serious?” Steve said.

“Well...you don’t have an earring yet.”

“ *Yet* ?” Steve said, the corner of his mouth turning up.

“Oh yeah. Gonna knock the preppy right out of you, Harrington.”

“Oh yeah? You can try.”

“I’m *going* to.” He nodded at the necklace. “Wear that under your shirt. I wouldn’t broadcast this.”

“In Hawkins?” Steve said. “Me either.”

That would be new, Steve considered. He’d never had to date somebody in secret before. It would get out eventually. Keeping

secrets about telekinetically powered kids and monsters was one thing. But keeping secrets about relationships was next to impossible.”

“I’ve never had a boyfriend before,” Billy said. “Said I never would. Just get laid.”

“I’ll tell you a secret,” Steve murmured, suddenly focussed on kissing a particular spot under Billy’s ear. “Stranger things have happened in Hawkins, Indiana.”

“I’ll tell you a secret,” Billy said. “I’ve seen *The Breakfast Club* three times.”

(fin)